

[The president would have shut down government over Planned Parenthood funding.](#)

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The senior senator from New York was on to something when he complained about ideology getting in the way of spending cuts. Just not in the way he would have us believe.

Appearing on MSNBC on Friday before the budget deal was finally cut, Sen. Charles Schumer launched a pre-emptive blame strike.

"We are on the one-yard line," he complained, "but Republicans in the House are making a goal-line stand on women's health, which has nothing—nothing—to do with the budget." The reference was to a GOP bid to strip Planned Parenthood, America's largest abortion provider, of hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Schumer was not alone. Sen. Patty Murray (D., Wash.) advanced a similar argument. "[W]hat they are saying to us today," she declared, "is that if you want to keep the federal government open, you have to throw women under the bus." Ditto for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, who kept insisting that the only thing between a shutdown and a deal was GOP social ideology.

Whoa there! Might there be another way to read this?

In the end, President Barack Obama was the one who refused to blink on Planned Parenthood. Another way of saying it is this: The president was willing to shut down the entire federal government rather than see Planned Parenthood's federal funding cut.

According to press accounts leaked by Democratic aides, House Speaker John Boehner argued for the funding cut late into the evening. The president answered, "Nope, zero." He then said, "John, this is it." Mr. Boehner accepted the budget deal without that cut.

A Republican aide confirmed more or less the same account to me. He said it was "chilling" to see how inflexible Mr. Obama was. You might call it ideological.

Certainly there's a political logic here. To begin with, many of the women's groups that supported him are still smarting over the executive order (banning federal dollars for abortions) he issued to secure passage of his health-care bill. That's still a sore spot, even though—as his former chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, recently told the Chicago Tribune editorial board—that language is not in the law. The presumption -being, of course, that eventually the order will be overridden.

The hard line on Planned Parenthood funding also makes sense if the president was calculating that Mr. Boehner would get the blame for a shutdown no matter what. That's a reasonable assumption, judging from the way the press has swallowed the White House line on who the extremists here are. Never mind that this is the same president who, as an Illinois state senator, famously opposed limiting even partial-birth abortion.

For his part, Mr. Boehner now finds himself criticized for accepting too little in spending cuts and giving up the ship on defunding Planned Parenthood to get a budget deal. Leaving aside his victory in restoring the previous status quo prohibiting taxpayer funding for abortions in the District of Columbia, Mr. Boehner came away with two strong accomplishments.

First, in just three months as speaker, he has managed to change the national debate from

"stimulus" and "investment" to "how much spending do we need to cut"—which is why Mr. Obama will be pressing the reset button in a planned speech on spending tomorrow. Second, on Planned Parenthood funding, he has secured something that those concerned about restoring these contentious issues to the people should appreciate: an agreement that the Senate will vote on a separate measure to defund Planned Parenthood.

Surely it tells you something about who the real extremists are that an up or down vote is deemed a concession. In an appearance at a rally before the deal, Mr. Schumer vowed that any bill taking taxpayer dollars from Planned Parenthood would "never, never, never" pass the Senate. In the normal way of doing things, it wouldn't even have come up for a vote.

Most Americans, it is probably safe to say, have no idea that we are talking about an organization that performed 332,278 abortions in 2009—one abortion every 95 seconds. Planned Parenthood counters that no federal dollars go to abortion, but Americans are not stupid. They know money is fungible.

As for serving pregnant women, that would be worth some congressional attention too. Planned Parenthood's own numbers show that more than 97% of pregnant women it treated were given abortions—against fewer than 3% who received nonabortion services such as adoption or prenatal care.

Thanks to Mr. Boehner, we'll at least have a democratic debate on this subject instead of a backroom fait accompli. And thanks to the way this deal was struck, we have a reminder that it was the Democratic president and not the Republican speaker who stood on ideology when he decided that it was worth shutting down the entire federal government to protect Planned Parenthood's taxpayer dollars.